

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement
of
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Chair Jan Schakowsky

“Legislation to Promote the Health and Safety of Racehorses”

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, thank you all for being here with us.

Today’s hearing is to discuss H.R. 1754, the Horseracing Integrity Act. This bill is vital for the health of equine athletes, jockeys, and horseracing itself.

The protection of animals over all, and horses in particular, is very important in my district; my office has received thousands of letters in support of horse welfare in recent years.

I was the owner of a thoroughbred who never won on the track, but was always good to me.

There is an urgent and desperate need for this legislation. Last year 38 horses died at Santa Anita Park alone. In the final race of the season, the horse Mongolian Groom died just 200 yards from the finish line.

Earlier this month, two race horses were euthanized on the same day at Harrah’s Louisiana Downs.

Frankly, one death is too many. But the inexcusable fact is that we can do more to prevent these deaths.

Patchwork oversight and spotty regulation mean horses are often treated with drugs designed to enhance their performance without concerns for the health risks.

Jockeys face a real danger as well and we’re so happy to have Hall of Fame jockey, Chris McCarron with us today. Because doped horses are more likely to fall and injure themselves, riders risk serious injury.

The lack of uniform regulation and supervision means state commissions allow parties to play by their own rules—too often at the expense of the horse.

Horseracing is a historic sport, but it faces a rapid decline if this persists. The continuation of avoidable race horse deaths will erode confidence in every facet of this sport.

Thank you, and I yield the balance of my time to Congressman Tonko.